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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 000155

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [SR](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: BELGRADE REACTION TO CG LONDON STATEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Michael C. Polt, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (c) The CG London declaration was discussed within the negotiating team on February 01, and PM advisor Aleksander Simic delivered the official reaction to local media at the end of the day, with the reaction appearing in local press by February 02. The official statement highlighted the negotiating team's satisfaction that the statement discussed a settlement within the framework of UNSCR 1244, and cautioned against setting specific deadlines for final settlement. Local press also prominently reported Russian President Putin's statements on Kosovo (which followed a widely-cited interview by DAS DiCarlo in Kommersant). Local media highlighted Putin's insistence that a Kosovo solution be universally applicable under international law and that no deadlines be set for concluding negotiations.

¶2. (c) PM advisor Vladeta Jankovic told emboffs earlier on February 01 that Kostunica's initial reaction after a first reading was a positive one. He said the PM was pleased by the tone of the statement, which was better than what he was expecting and better than past statements, and was particularly pleased with the reference to UNSCR 1244. Tadic advisor Dusan Batakovic, meanwhile, noted that Belgrade had reservations about the mentioning of a preferred deadline of the end of 2006 for status talks, saying it would be best not to establish deadlines in the expectation that the two sides might need more time to reach a sustainable agreement. He emphasized that it was not Belgrade's intention to drag out negotiations, but said recommending a date certain for a settlement would only encourage the Albanian side to refuse to engage with the expectation of reaping the prize of independence at the appointed date regardless of outcomes on other issues.

¶3. (c) Comment: Belgrade appears to have been satisfied with the tone of the statement, but was even more clearly buoyed by Putin's defense of the Serb position. Of particular note, neither Tadic's nor Kostunica's office took issue (at least initially) with the statement's assertion that a solution of Kosovo must be acceptable to the people of Kosovo, a statement we would have expected to be more prominently noted in Belgrade. The focus on 1244 and the lack of comment on outcome acceptability strengthens our concern that Kostunica has not internalized any form of independence outcome.

POLT